



# jagvision

For Environmental Clean-Up  
of the Muggah Creek Watershed

JAG: Joint Action Group

Volume 2 • Issue 3: Spring / Summer 99

## JAG's Mission

To educate, involve and empower the community through partnerships, to determine and implement acceptable solutions for Canada's worst hazardous waste site, and to assess and address the impact on human health.

JAG website developed

## Visit [www.muggah.org](http://www.muggah.org)

JAG has launched a web site ([www.muggah.org](http://www.muggah.org)) that they hope will be used by people all over the world to learn more about the Muggah Creek Watershed's tar ponds and coke ovens sites.

"We are very proud of this web site," says Dr. Carl Buchanan, Chairman of the Joint Action Group. "We have put forth the facts regarding Muggah Creek so that people can be informed. We hope it may bring people into the JAG process and we also hope that it may reach someone out there who may have some answers as far as the technology that can be used in the clean-up process."

MediaSpark IT Solutions Inc. of Sydney created the site and will maintain it for a period of one year. Web site information includes the history of the

site, JAG's mandate and mission, site maps, the nature of its contamination, group minutes, a library of completed studies, and a three minute clip of "The Legacy," a video describing the site and the JAG process.

"We want people to use this web site as a feedback mechanism as well," says Buchanan. "Already we have had almost 100 entries in our guest book from people

giving their opinion on the web site, and may I say that the overwhelming majority of them are extremely positive."

The educational site serves to encourage the three levels of government to remain committed to the project and paints a true picture of what the people of Cape Breton are now dealing with in the aftermath of the industrial age. Despite what some critics contend, JAG is firm in their belief that providing this easy access to information

regarding Cape Breton's "problem" will help them more readily find a solution.

**"We have put forth the facts regarding Muggah Creek so that people can be informed."**

*Dr. Carl Buchanan,  
JAG Chairman*

About  
JAG

Muggah  
Creek

JAG  
Groups

Current  
Events

Library

Website  
Map



*"Legacy" video paints picture of Cape Breton Island*

## JAG Video Receives National Recognition

JAG's video entitled "The Legacy" has won national recognition from the Canadian Corporate Television Association, an organization that supports the producers of educational and promotional videos.

"We contracted the services of Folkus Atlantic to create a video with the input of our Public Education and Participation and Site Security working groups which we plan to use as an educational tool in our discussions with the greater community," said Dr. Carl Buchanan, Chairman of the Joint

Action Group. "We know that Folkus Atlantic is doing highly professional work and it is great to see them being recognized. We knew it was an award winner right from the first viewing."

"The Legacy" tells the story of how the community-driven JAG process is dedicated to righting the mistakes of the past. It clearly describes the Muggah Creek Watershed area and depicts a beautiful picture of Cape Breton Island and how its people are uniting to rid the Sydney community of toxic substances and contamination.

The video shares Cape Breton's message, garnering local, national and even global support for the cause, while sharing the strong characteristics of the Island and its people.

**Comments and/or Info:  
Joint Action Group (JAG)  
320 Esplanade,  
Sydney NS B1P 7B9  
Tel: 563-5584  
Fax: 563-5240**



## Phase I Site Assessment

# Objectives and Recommendations

The Phase I Site Assessment has been completed and the study now provides JAG with a summary of the environmental conditions which may or do exist within the Muggah Creek Watershed. Information compiled during the Phase I Site Assessment provides a better understanding of the environmental issues associated with the contamination and provides background for clean-up activities to deal with these issues.

Objectives of the Phase I Site Assessment were to identify the potential surface and subsurface conditions at and near the site, to develop a preliminary conceptual site model, and to establish a framework for future investigations at the site.

There is currently no documented evidence of situations within the scope of this study that represent a short term risk to human health. In this context, several interim measures are recommended as actions that **can** be taken as opposed to actions that **must** be taken immediately. These temporary measures improve safety and reduce the potential for human contact. Some of the recom-

mended interim measures include the following:

- Exposed coal tar should be identified and a cover installed followed by regular inspections.
- Testing should be conducted on the former DOMTAR Storage Tank to characterize the contents and to allow proper disposal followed by demolition of the tank.
- Above ground structures should be removed.
- Grass should be planted on existing bare ground areas and dust control programs implemented during all remedial operations.
- A detailed inspection of the perimeter fencing should be conducted and any required upgrades performed.
- Surface drainage of the Municipal Ash Incinerator Disposal (MAID) Landfill should be mapped and measures installed to prevent discharge of contaminated water to surface water. Monitoring of the groundwater at the site should be continued and additional investigation performed to better characterize the site.

---

*These temporary measures improve safety and reduce potential for human contact*

---

CBCL Limited and Conestoga-Rovers & Associates Ltd., the companies who conducted the assessment, recommend that a technical and information database be developed and maintained for the site area to ensure efficient usage of the data. A long term management approach for the technical investigations and clean-up for the site area is also recommended. This includes development of an education process related to the project and technical support to JAG to provide peer review, guidance and strategic advice.

## Implement the Phase I Site Assessment

# Roundtable Urges Government to Act

JAG passed a motion on February 24, 1999 to advise government partners to start developing the terms of reference to implement the recommended interim measures which are outlined in the Phase I Site Assessment Report by CBCL Limited and Conestoga Rovers.

Specifically, the Joint Action Group called for quick attention to the interim measure which recommends that the Government Partners immediately fund and initiate a process to develop and evaluate criteria information necessary to define and implement an appropriate separation zone. JAG has request-

ed this measure, which will be completed with the assistance of area residents, to be in place by June 1st of this year.

"JAG continues to work towards the clean-up of the site and the Phase I Site Assessment Report certainly has pointed us in the right direction," says Dr. Carl (Bucky) Buchanan, Chair of JAG. "It is our hope that our government partners will react swiftly to the motions passed."

A motion was recently passed at the Roundtable on April 28th pertaining to JAG's official definition of human health: "the state of complete physical, mental and social well-

being, and not just the absence of disease and disability." The motion states that, after the June 1, 1999 deadline, if the government has no acceptable solution for the people of Frederick Street, that JAG issue a directive to government to move the residents who wish to be moved immediately.

In the upcoming years, comprehensive investigations will be undertaken to more fully define the extent of contamination in the site area (Phases II and III), and considerable clean-up efforts are being planned.

## Establishing zones

# General Criteria for Separation Zones

*The general criteria used to establish appropriate separation zones could include the following:*

### **On and off-site monitoring programs:**

the need for unrestricted access to adjacent lands for monitoring of air, groundwater, surface water and soil, before, during and after remediation.

**Proximity:** the distance between those being impacted and the location.

**Science:** the existing and/or potential human health and environmental issues associated with existing conditions at the hazardous site, and the proposed site remediation (dust, vapour and odour generation, groundwater and surface water quality, etc.).

**Contingency measures:** adjacent areas of the site may be required for implementation of contingency plans to be used during remediation.

**Safety:** potentially unsafe conditions (e.g. blasting) that might exist at the site.

**Social issues:** the concerns of residents in adjacent areas regarding operations and conditions at the site and their real and/or perceived effects on themselves and their families.

**Separation zone:** see back page



## Volunteer Profile: Dan Fraser

# Retiree Contributes to History-making Process

Dan Fraser exemplifies what it means to be a community volunteer. As Vice-Chair of the Public Education and Participation (PEP) working group with JAG, Dan is devoted to the process because of his belief in helping the people of Cape Breton and making the place he and his family call "home" a healthier and more beautiful place to live.

Dan has been a JAG volunteer for about a year, getting involved in the process shortly after he and his wife, Arlene, retired in Cape Breton. He is also a member of JAG's Human Resource Committee, Steering Committee and is a voting member of Roundtable, the decision-making body of the organization.

---

***"Once we get Sydney cleaned up, Cape Breton should take a backseat to no one."***

---

"It's exciting to see the energy put forth by all our volunteer members," says Dan. "Once people get involved in the process, they tend to maintain a long-time interest - it's infectious."

Dan Fraser grew up in Sydney. In 1962, at the age of 20 he joined the Canadian Armed

Forces in the Royal Canadian Dental Corps as a dental assistant and later trained to be a dental hygienist. In 1970, he was commissioned to the rank of Lieutenant and became a personnel administration officer. During this time he had a 4-year posting at the radar site in Sydney, spent 3 years in Germany, and then attended Dalhousie University to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree. He spent the next seven years in Ottawa and then transferred to Halifax where he and his family lived for nine years before returning home.

Throughout his 35 year military career, Dan along with his wife and two daughters, always made time to visit Cape Breton to see family and friends during the summer months, March breaks and Christmas vacations. He says they always had ties to the island and he and his wife are delighted to have retired here. One daughter lives in Dartmouth and the other in Moosejaw, Saskatchewan, but they still consider Cape Breton home.

Dan says his decision to become a JAG volunteer was mainly a personal one. Upon his retirement as a Lieutenant Colonel and return to the island, he spent time looking for the right opportunities to contribute the knowledge and experience he had gained during his career. Given the experience of working with people in various situations and settings, Dan acquired a genuine interest in people and making sure their needs and wants were met. More

importantly, says Dan, he wanted to be able to help the Sydney community in its efforts to clean up the Muggah Creek Watershed area because of his personal experience with a family history of chronic illnesses.



*Dan Fraser makes a difference as a community volunteer*

"My parents both died at a young age - my mother of cancer and my father with heart disease. I always felt that it had something to do with where we lived on Grand Lake Road - in direct contact with smoke from the steel plant and the old marsh dump."

*Continued on back page...*

## Becoming part of the process

# Why Your Input Is Important

The Joint Action Group (JAG) is a community driven process. In fact, with involvement from every sector of our community, the task of cleaning up the Muggah Creek Watershed will move at a much quicker pace. With increased participation there will be new ideas, energy and additional members in the JAG process. These informed members will be capable of passing on accurate information regarding the actions and progress made by the current dedicated volunteer members of our community who work with our government partners to clean up the country's largest remediation site.

The residents of Cape Breton have been provided with a unique opportunity by

being empowered to make sound recommendations leading to the clean-up on a project-by-project basis. These recommen-

---

***Increased participation means new ideas and new energy***

---

dations are based on knowledge provided by competent, technical and scientific studies carried out by qualified and respected experts. This step-by-step approach will ensure the appropriate health and safety concerns for workers and

residents are considered first as major clean-up efforts come closer to reality.

This concept of empowering the community to take action is considered to be on the leading edge of public participation in a large remediation project. More information will be provided on this concept in a future newsletter.

For now, please consider taking part in this history making effort. All residents are welcome and encouraged to take part as a member or observer at any Working Group or Committee meeting. Your time, effort and, most importantly, your ideas are welcome. Please contact the JAG office at 563-5544 for additional information regarding meeting times and locations.



## Definitions

**Quality Assurance:** a planned system of activities (program) whose purpose is to provide assurance of the reliability and defensibility of the data.

**Quality Control:** a routine application of procedures for controlling the monitoring process. QC is the responsibility of all those performing hands-on operations in the field and in the laboratory.

**Leachate:** Leachate from a sanitary landfill is a mineralized liquid with a high content of organic and inorganic substances. Any liquid, including any suspended components in the liquid, that has percolated through or drained from hazardous waste.

**Vendor Protocol:** a framework for the management, administration and evaluation of demonstrated projects and treatability studies for the Muggah Creek Watershed.

This framework or process is to be followed so as new remediation technologies come forward and are evaluated, the management structure is able to report back to the community. The Vendor Protocol is specific to technologies assessment for remediation.

## The Winner is...

Ashley Thistle, 13, of North Sydney is the winner of our name the newsletter contest with her submission "JAG VISIONS".

## Separation Zones

Hazardous waste sites that are under remediation, as well as sites that routinely handle hazardous materials, are typically surrounded by an area of land that separates or buffers these sites from neighbouring land uses. These separation zones are intended to ensure that adjacent land use is compatible with remedial works undertaken at the hazardous waste site.

# Opinion Poll Reveals Beliefs

People living in Sydney strongly question the effect the environment is having on the community's health according to an opinion poll recently conducted by the Health Studies Working Group (HSWG) of JAG.

The job of HSWG is to determine if there is an environmental threat

to our community and to work with the community on improving our overall health. An opinion poll was recently conducted to determine the attitudes, values and beliefs of the community on JAG's approach to health related issues. With this knowl-

edge comes the ability to make decisions, while considering the wishes of the community.

Overall results of the telephone poll conducted by Icon Market Research in the industrial Cape Breton area, show that personal health is rated more positively than community health. A majority of those surveyed said they have increased their efforts over the past year to improve personal health by increasing exercise, changing diet, reducing smoking and receiving medical treatment.

"Obviously people in the community feel the personal responsibility and are taking action to improve their own health," says Michelle Gardiner, HSWG chair. "But, when it comes to overall community health, people strongly question the role of the environment."

Forty per cent felt that they could make an impact on the health of their community by taking part in personal initiatives, getting involved with groups or joining committees. Perceived barriers to improving the health of the community included economic factors,

lack of political interest, and a lack of participation. Furthermore, the research shows that there is fairly strong feeling that personal involvement can help bring about change in the community. A majority of respondents expressed that they would like to

have some involvement in decision-making on community health issues. Top rated methods of involvement include attending meetings and becoming better informed through telephone communication and mail. Local newspaper articles were also highly rated as a way for JAG to communicate.

With this feedback from the poll, the HSWG will plan more in-depth citizen engagement activities with the goal of having a broader participation from the community on health issues. The poll will guide outreach efforts in designing JAG's educational projects to match the specific needs of various sectors of the community with greater accuracy, insight, and efficiency.

**Health Ratings**



## Volunteer Dan Fraser (continued from inside...)

As a member of the PEP working group, Dan spends most of his time attending meetings and educating the community on the complexity and ramifications of the Watershed area. He appreciates that local residents attend important gatherings and ask pertinent questions as well as provide valuable input. Dan is also active as the membership chairperson at the Branch 12 Legion, a member of the Isle Royale ATV Club and helps out with the Lingan Days committee.

"I enjoy getting out into the community and meeting people," says Dan. "Residents are realizing that there is a very positive side to what JAG is doing to clean up the tar ponds and coke ovens sites. They understand that it can't be fixed overnight and appreciate that we're providing all the information we can and asking for their feedback as each step is taken."

Dan feels confident that the tar ponds and

coke ovens sites will be cleaned up under the JAG process. He believes Sydney and the surrounding area will take their rightful place as a clean and beautiful place to live.

"I have traveled to and lived in many wonderful places over the years, and have never experienced what we have here in Cape Breton. Right now Sydney is the only place on the island that is a deterrent, but once we get it cleaned up, Cape Breton should take a backseat to no one."

Dan says his greatest wish is that more members of the community will come out and become involved with the JAG process so the people of Cape Breton can show the world that we have the ability, the fortitude and the desire to clean up what is currently known as the largest toxic waste site in Canada and help make this project the largest clean-up effort in North America.